

# News Release



WASHINGTON  
**WorkFirst**

**For Immediate Release**  
**Date: May 29, 2002**

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## **Kessler to honor businesses for WorkFirst partnership**

PORT TOWNSEND – Jefferson County businesses are being recognized for helping low-income parents find jobs and create better lives for themselves and their families.

Rep. Lynn Kessler, D-24th District, will help honor 24 employers during a luncheon at noon Friday, June 7, at the Port Townsend Elks Lodge, 555 Otto St. Local business leaders and a former welfare recipient will also speak at the event.

The businesses are being thanked for hiring participants in WorkFirst, Washington's welfare-to-work program.

"Partnerships with local employers are the backbone of WorkFirst's success," said Dennis Kelly, administrator of the Department of Social and Health Services' Community Service Office in Port Townsend. "Every new job makes a difference for a family's well-being and benefits Jefferson County's economy."

The number of parents receiving welfare grants in Port Townsend has decreased 77 percent since WorkFirst started, from 702 cases in January 1997 to just 159 in April 2002. Statewide, the percentage of families receiving welfare is less than 2.5 percent – the lowest in more than 30 years.

"Many businesses have declared WorkFirst the solution to their hiring needs," said Phil Libott, a WorkSource specialist at the Jefferson County Career Development Center.

"Job fairs and free applicant screening have made it possible for them to eliminate high advertising and recruitment costs. Plus, they save even more because WorkFirst offers tax credits for employers and training for their workers."

Four agencies administer WorkFirst programs: the Employment Security Department, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Office of Trade and Economic Development and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. For more information about WorkFirst, visit [www.wa.gov/workfirst](http://www.wa.gov/workfirst).

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